

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application. Please amend claims 39, 68, 80, 103, 104, and 107, and add new claim 110, as follows:

1-38 (Cancelled).

39. (Currently Amended) A method of grinding an inorganic particulate material in an aqueous suspension, wherein said grinding is carried out in one or more stages, ending in a final grinding stage, said aqueous suspension comprising a sub-effective amount of at least one dispersant for the inorganic particulate material at completion of the final grinding stage, wherein the aqueous suspension comprises up to 0.19% by weight of the at least one dispersant, based on the dry weight of the inorganic particulate material.

40. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 39, wherein the inorganic particulate material comprises calcium carbonate.

41. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 39, wherein the inorganic particulate material comprises kaolin.

42. (Cancelled).

43. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 39, wherein the aqueous suspension comprises up to about 50% by weight of the inorganic particulate material.

44. (Cancelled).

45. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 39, wherein the aqueous suspension comprises up to about 0.15% by weight of the at least one dispersant, based on the dry weight of the inorganic particulate material.

46. (Cancelled).

47. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 45, wherein the aqueous suspension comprises up to about 0.05% by weight of the at least one dispersant, based on the dry weight of the inorganic particulate material.

48. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 39, wherein the at least one dispersant is chosen from polyacrylates.

49. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 39, wherein the at least one dispersant is chosen from polymetaphosphates.

50. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 49, wherein the polymetaphosphate is chosen from sodium hexametaphosphate and tetrasodium metaphosphate.

51-53. (Cancelled).

54. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 39, wherein, after grinding, the inorganic particulate material has a steepness factor above about 35.

55. (Cancelled).

56. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 54, wherein, after grinding, the inorganic particulate material has a steepness factor above about 45.

57. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 39, wherein, after grinding, the inorganic particulate material has an increased steepness, as compared to the steepness of the inorganic particulate material before grinding.

58-67. (Cancelled).

68. (Currently Amended) An aqueous suspension of at least one ground inorganic particulate material comprising a sub-effective amount of at least one dispersant for the at least one inorganic particulate material, prepared by a method of

grinding at least one inorganic particulate material in an aqueous suspension, wherein said grinding is carried out in one or more stages, ending in a final grinding stage, wherein said aqueous suspension comprises a sub-effective amount of at least one dispersant for the at least one inorganic particulate material at completion of the final grinding stage, and wherein the aqueous suspension comprises up to 0.19% by weight of the at least one dispersant, based on the dry weight of the inorganic particulate material.

69-78. (Cancelled).

79. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 39, wherein presence of the sub-effective amount of the at least one dispersant during grinding inhibits corrosion.

80. (Currently Amended) A method of grinding an inorganic particulate material in an aqueous suspension, said aqueous suspension comprising a sub-effective amount of at least one dispersant for the inorganic particulate material, wherein said aqueous suspension comprises the inorganic particulate material at a solids level up to about 35% [[50%]] by weight, based on the total weight of the suspension.

81. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein the inorganic particulate material comprises calcium carbonate.

82. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein the inorganic particulate material comprises kaolin.

83. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein the aqueous suspension comprises up to 0.19% by weight of the at least one dispersant, based on the dry weight of the inorganic particulate material.

84. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 83, wherein said aqueous suspension comprises the inorganic particulate material at a solids level from about 20% to about 30% by weight, based on the total weight of the suspension.

85. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein the at least one dispersant is chosen from polyacrylates.

86. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein the at least one dispersant is chosen from polymetaphosphates.

87. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 86, wherein the polymetaphosphate is chosen from sodium hexametaphosphate and tetrasodium metaphosphate.

88. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein, after grinding, the inorganic particulate material has a steepness factor above about 35.

89. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 88, wherein, after grinding, the inorganic particulate material has a steepness factor above about 45.

90. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein, after grinding, the inorganic particulate material has an increased steepness, as compared to the steepness of the inorganic particulate material before grinding.

91. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein presence of the sub-effective amount of the at least one dispersant during grinding inhibits corrosion.

92. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein the resultant ground inorganic particulate material is added to:

- a paper or paper pulp to provide a coating or filler therefore, and/or
- a composition which is subsequently processed to obtain a paper.

93. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein the resultant ground inorganic particulate material is added to:

- a polymer or rubber, and/or
- to a composition which is subsequently processed to obtain a polymer or rubber.

94. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 93, wherein the resultant polymer is formed into a film.

95. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein the resultant ground inorganic particulate material is added to:

- a paint, and/or
- a composition which is subsequently processed to obtain a paint.

96. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein the resultant ground inorganic particulate material is added to:

- a sealant or mastic, and/or
- a composition which is subsequently processed to obtain a sealant or mastic.

97. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 80, wherein the resultant ground inorganic particulate material is added to:

- a ceramic, and/or
- a composition which is subsequently processed to obtain a ceramic.

98. (Previously Presented) A paper or paper pulp, prepared by a method according to claim 92.

99. (Previously Presented) A polymer or rubber, prepared by a method according to claim 93.

100. (Previously Presented) A paint, prepared by a method according to claim 95.

101. (Previously Presented) A sealant or mastic, prepared by a method according to claim 96.

102. (Previously Presented) A ceramic, prepared by a method according to claim 97.

103. (Currently Amended) An aqueous suspension of at least one ground inorganic particulate material comprising a sub-effective amount of at least one dispersant for the at least one inorganic particulate material, prepared by a method of grinding at least one inorganic particulate material in an aqueous suspension, wherein said aqueous suspension comprises a sub-effective amount of at least one dispersant for the at least one inorganic particulate material, and wherein said aqueous suspension comprises the inorganic particulate material at a solids level up to about 35% ~~[[50%]]~~ by weight, based on the total weight of the suspension.

104. (Currently Amended) A method of preparing an aqueous suspension of an inorganic particulate material, said method comprising:

grinding an inorganic particulate material in an aqueous suspension, said aqueous suspension comprising the inorganic particulate material at a solids level up to

about 35% by weight, based on the total weight of the suspension, said aqueous suspension comprising a sub-effective amount of at least one dispersant for the inorganic particulate material; and

adding, after grinding, at least one dispersant to said aqueous suspension in a dispersant-effective amount for the inorganic particulate material.

105. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 104, wherein the sub-effective amount of the at least one dispersant is present in the aqueous suspension in an amount up to 0.19% by weight, based on the dry weight of the inorganic particulate material.

106. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 104, wherein the at least one dispersant added to said aqueous suspension in a dispersant-effective amount is added to the aqueous suspension in an amount of at least about 0.3% by weight, based on the dry weight of the inorganic particulate material.

107. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 104, wherein the aqueous suspension comprising the sub-effective amount of at least one dispersant for the grinding of the inorganic particulate material comprises the inorganic particulate material at a solids level from about 20% to about 30% ~~up to about 50%~~ by weight, based on the total weight of the suspension.

108. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 107, further comprising adjusting the solids level of the aqueous suspension after grinding to provide an aqueous suspension comprising the inorganic particulate material at a solids level above about 50% by weight, based on the total weight of the suspension.

109. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 108, wherein the adjusting of the solids level of the aqueous suspension after grinding comprises dewatering the aqueous suspension.

110. (New) A method of grinding an inorganic particulate material in an aqueous suspension, wherein said grinding is carried out in one or more stages, ending in a final grinding stage, said aqueous suspension comprising a sub-effective amount of at least one dispersant for the inorganic particulate material at completion of the final grinding stage, wherein the aqueous suspension comprises up to 0.19% by weight of the at least one dispersant, based on the dry weight of the inorganic particulate material, and wherein said aqueous suspension comprises the inorganic particulate material at a solids level up to about 35% by weight, based on the total weight of the suspension.